AN UNINHABITED ISLAND OF REMARKABLE BEAUTY

No doubt you've spotted Phillip Island, just 6 kilometres to the south of Norfolk. In the right light, you may have noticed its striking colours; it's rich reds and purples, subtle yellows and greys; arched like rainbows through the contours of its imposing form. Some have even dubbed it the "Uluru of the South Pacific".

It is difficult to get to and harder still to climb, but for the thousands of sea birds that regularly visit, Phillip Island is nothing short of an oasis.

It is also home to a number of rare and endangered plants, all of which are thriving under the protection and management of Parks Australia. The island is free from feral predators but this hasn't always been the case and history's scars run deep.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Phillip Island is notoriously difficult to get to and challenging to climb. The landing is, at best, hazardous and the walking track is unsuitable for inexperienced or unfit trekkers.

- All visitors must be accompanied by a person who is familiar with the terrain.
- Please wear sturdy footwear and take care when stepping onto the rock shelf from the boat, as this area is often wet and very slippery.
- The whole track is uneven with loose rocks, so please watch your step. Be extremely mindful of rocks falling from above – particularly on the steeper sections where someone may be climbing ahead of you. Where there are ropes, please use them.
- There is no fresh water on the island. Protect yourself from the sun and carry plenty of water with you to avoid dehydration.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- BEFORE LEAVING NORFOLK check your boots, bags and clothing and remove all soil, seeds and insects. Phillip Island is free from many pests, weeds and diseases.
- STAY ON THE TRACK. Avoid damaging plants and causing erosion.
- DO NOT DISTURB the flora or fauna. Phillip is an important breeding area for migratory sea birds and all plants and animals are protected.
- LEAVE NOTHING BEHIND. Please take all rubbish with you when you leave Phillip Island – including food-scraps - as these may encourage introduced birds and rodents.

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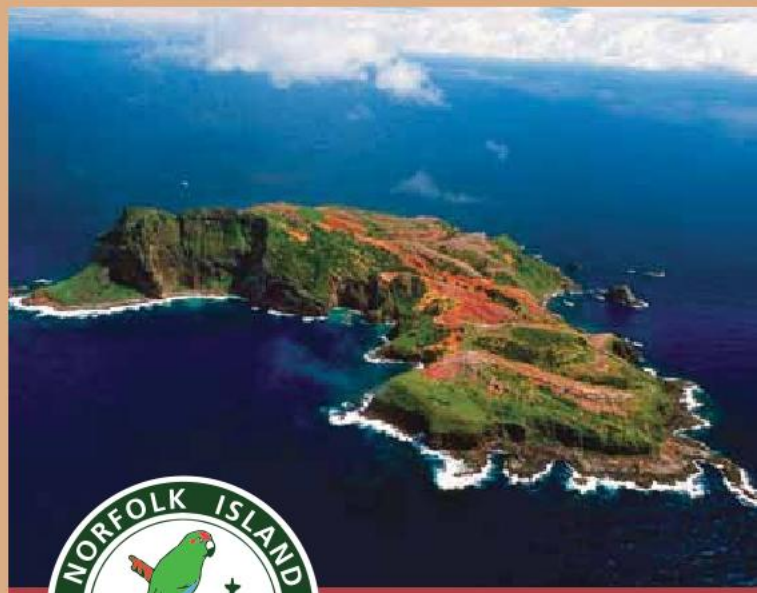
Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Discover the hidden treasures of Phillip Island



NORFOLK ISLAND
NATIONAL PARK AND
BOTANIC GARDEN

PHILLIP ISLAND

Australian Government
Director of National Parks

SHARE THE HISTORY AND THE WONDER OF PHILLIP ISLAND

A SEABIRD HAVEN RECOVERING FROM A HARSH HISTORY

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

PAST

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, when Norfolk's penal settlements were in full swing, Phillip Island was overrun with pigs, goats and rabbits. The animals were introduced as 'hunting targets' for the officers of the day and Provided a food-source for all of Norfolk's inhabitants.

When the settlement folded, the animals were left behind for the incoming free settlers from Pitcairn. Opportunities to visit Phillip were fairly limited, so the rabbit population increased without restraint.

By 1912, the damage these animals were causing to the island's vegetation was clearly evident. Pigs and goats had earlier destroyed much of the foliage, but the rabbits were undermining the soil structure and preventing regeneration. The island had become all but a wasteland.

The environment continued to degrade until the early 1980s when several attempts were made to eradicate the rabbits. Commonwealth park staff, working co-operatively with the Norfolk community, tried several tactics. They introduced disease, baited, poisoned, trapped and shot the population into oblivion, taking down the last of the unwelcome residents in 1988.

PRESENT

The process of regeneration is a slow one, aided by the protection afforded the island in 1996, when it became part of the Norfolk Island National Park.

Weed eradication is high on the agenda, together with the propagation and replanting of key native species.

There is little doubt the island is recovering. The rehabilitation work is a credit to both Parks Australia staff and the community; a shining example of what can be achieved when the two work harmoniously together.

Miraculously, several reptiles that no longer exist on Norfolk Island maintain a viable population on Phillip. The Phillip Island centipede has also been rediscovered. One day it may even be possible to reintroduce species that occurred here before the first settlement.

FUTURE

It will take many generations to restore key areas of this magnificent isle. It is no small task – but then Phillip is no small wonder... Worth every effort to improve and sustain its importance as a breeding site for seabirds in the South Pacific and Australasia.

NATURE'S BOUNTY ON PHILLIP ISLAND

PLANTS

Phillip Island hibiscus

C ↑

Hibiscus insularis

Phillip Island is home to the last wild population of this unique species of hibiscus. New flowers are yellow but as they mature they change colour, eventually becoming dark pink. They have been reintroduced on Norfolk Island through an active program of propagation and planting.

Norfolk Island abutilon

C ↑

Abutilion julianae

This broad-leafed evergreen was long thought to be extinct. But in 1985 rangers working on the rabbit eradication project spotted a single specimen growing from a cliff. With the last of the rabbits removed, this species is recovering naturally and increasing its coverage through propagation and planting.

Moo-oo

Cyperus lucidus

An abundant, sharp- edged sedge that draws attention readily. Even Lieutenant Governor Philip Gidley King (who named the island after his Governor, Arthur Phillip) found the grass "cut like a knife" while attempting to climb to the summit. Moo-oo is still used today by the island's dextrous weavers.

Norfolk Island pine

↑

Araucaria heterophylla

At the time of the first settlement there were around 150 Norfolk pines on Phillip Island. Many died as the introduced animals eroded the soil around their roots. Active planting of seedlings and an aerial dispersal of seeds, carried out with the assistance of the Australian military, in 1992 have led to a rise in numbers.

Pig face

Carpobrotus glaucescens

Occurring naturally on Phillip Island, this succulent creeper plays an important role in stabilising the soil. Purple flowers are present in the warmer months, but can sporadically appear at any time. Pig face is planted extensively to reduce erosion on exposed slopes.

Coastal coprosma

E ↑

Coprosma baueri

This rare, coastal shrub with glossy egg-shaped leaves was badly compromised by grazing feral animals. At the time of eradication there were just a few coprosma plants left. It is still listed as an endangered species but successful propagation and replanting has increased the number of individual plants to well over 400.

Phillip Island chaff tree

C ↑

Acaranthes margaretarum

Although it has been planted on Norfolk Island, this species only occurs naturally on Phillip. It is one of the few plants that are endemic to the island. It is a critically endangered shrub, related to *Achyranthes aspera*, or chaff flower - a common component of coastal herb-lands on Phillip.

SYMBOL LEGEND

C critically endangered	These species have an extremely high risk of becoming extinct due to their very small population size or very limited distribution.
E endangered	These species have a high risk of becoming extinct and require special management to secure their future.
V vulnerable	These species are likely to become endangered if the threats to their survival or reproduction are not reduced or removed.
↑ endemic	Occur naturally on Norfolk and/or Phillip Island and nowhere else in the world.

BIRDS

Sooty tern

Sterna fuscata

Locally we call these handsome black and white terns 'whale birds', since their annual return to Phillip coincides with that of the whales, cruising by on their spring/summer migration. Numbering in the thousands, these birds lay their eggs directly on the ground - preferably where vegetation occurs.

Masked booby

Sula dactylatra tasmani

These magnificent seabirds breed during spring/ summer. Although both parents take turns to incubate and raise their chicks, it is relatively easy to distinguish who's who. Male masked boobies whistle but females honk. And if they do that? -You may be standing a tad too close!

Australasian gannet

Morrus serrator

'Garnets' – as they are locally known – are similar in size and shape to the masked booby but differ considerably in their colouring. In their first year gannets are mottled brown but acquire white feathers as they mature. They also develop a golden colouring on their necks and heads. They are only in small numbers on Phillip Island.

Wedge-tailed shearwater

Puffinus pacificus

Nicknamed 'ghost birds' because of their eerie cry, these shearwaters are common on Norfolk and thought to be increasing in number on Phillip Island. As the soil structure improves, it is easier for them to dig viable burrows. These 'nests' are well hidden by the ground vegetation – so walkers, beware.

Grey ternlet

Procelsterna cerulea albivitta

The majority of Norfolk's grey ternlets nest on Nepean and the islets visible from Captain Cook's Monument. A relatively small number (up to 2000) breed on Phillip Island. They usually lay their eggs under boulders or in a small depression on the ground. Some, however, have been observed nesting under trees near the summit.

Providence petrel

Pterodroma solandri

Once prolific on Norfolk Island, the local population was all but annihilated in 1790. The HMS *Sirius* had wrecked on the reef, and 170,000 petrels were slaughtered to feed the hungry sailors. A small population remains on Phillip Island. Each winter, the female lays a single egg deep inside their one to two metre long burrow.

Black-winged petrel

Pterdroma nigripennis

Another 'burrower', the black-winged petrel appears to be thriving on Phillip. It struggles on Norfolk Island from predation by cats but since Phillip is now a feral-free zone, each year the number of breeding pairs, increases. During summer, listen out for their high pitched calls as they take to the skies for courtship.

Kermadec petrel

V

Pterodroma neglecta

The waters around Phillip are a great place for this petrel to harvest squid, one of its favourite foods. The Kermedec petrels were only discovered nesting here in the 1980s and regularly return to breed over summer. They prefer a sheltered site, tucked under low shrubs or between rocks.

Purple swamp hen

Porphyrio porphyrio

Known as the tarler bird locally, this hen has a preference for the taro or 'tarler' wetlands on Norfolk Island. They have only frequented Phillip since the vegetation cover has improved. They mainly eat seeds and grasses but have been observed eating abandoned eggs or chicks of other bird species.

Kestrel

Falco cenchroides

This long-term visitor has more recently decided to settle in the Norfolk area. Often seen hovering over a cliff or steep hill. The longitudinal black lines on its chests help with identification. If you keep watching you may even see it plummet, then swoop away with an insect for an entrée or a small bird for a meal.

White-necked petrel

Pterodroma cervicalis

The white-necked petrel is most likely a recent arrival, as its presence on Phillip wasn't noted until the 1980s. Numbers are fairly small compared to those that nest in the Kermedec Islands, but there's good reason to hope their numbers will increase on Phillip Island as vegetation cover continues to improve.

Red-tailed tropic bird

Phaethon rubicauda

Another seabird clearly increasing in numbers since the eradication of the feral animals. They nest on the ground, at the base of trees or near boulders that afford some protection. Their serrated-edged beaks are the same colour as their scarlet tail quills and when females are nesting, the salmon-pink flush on their chest feathers deepens.

REPTILES AND INVERTEBRATES

Gecko

V

Christinus guentheri

Fossil evidence suggests this motley olive-green gecko once lived on Norfolk Island, but it is thought to have suffered local extinction due to predation by rodents. Fortunately rodents and cats have never established themselves on Phillip, so the gecko survives there in large numbers.

Skink

V

Oligosoma lichenigera

In the Norfolk group this nocturnal skink is only found on Phillip island. It also occurs on Lord Howe Island. As the rehabilitated vegetation on Phillip increases, so to will the numbers and range of this curious reptile.

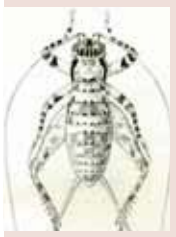
Centipede

↑

Cormocephalus coynei

Growing to over 15 centimetres, this robust creature is found only on Phillip and Nepean islands, but may also have occurred on Norfolk Island in the past.

It is deep brown in colour with translucent orange legs and feelers.



Phillip Island cricket

↑

Nestitathra philipense

Another species unique to Phillip Island, having - in all likelihood - vanished from Norfolk Island when the cockroach was unwittingly introduced.

All the more reason for visitors to Phillip to check their bags for any stowaways, prior to getting on the boat.

Phillip Island land snail

C ↑

Mathewsoconcha phillipii

This critically endangered land snail is now restricted to Phillip Island. On the off-chance you might see one, they are 16mm in diameter and 12mm high, with a fawn to whitish shell that sports a narrow white peripheral band. Please report and document any sightings.